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ABSTRACT

This newsletter includes five articles on early childhood education and young children, with particular reference to poor and minority children. "Scientific Literacy Is Child's Play" (Hilaria Bauer) discusses the natural development of scientific literacy in young children through their construction of knowledge and play. "Children of America, Take Your Mark. Ready. Set. Wait a Minute" (Bradley Scott) summarizes the Children's Defense Fund findings on child poverty, hunger, and health problems that may impede preschool children's ability to meet the high expectations of Goals 2000. The impacts on children of current Congressional proposals are outlined for child care, child health, basic income support, and child nutrition. "A Synergistic Multi-Age Model for Minority Students" (Felix Montes) outlines the general benefits of multiage education and how these advantages can foster integration of limited-English-proficient and culturally diverse students into the educational system. "Needed: A Massive Moral Movement To Leave No Child Behind" (Marian Wright Edelman) calls on parents, communities, and political leaders to take responsibility for the well-being of all children and make a sustained moral commitment to meet the health, educational, and financial needs of children. "Technology, Teachers and Early Childhood" (Aurora Yanez-Perez) outlines the benefits of computer use by young children and discusses ways that teachers can create an environment conducive to learning with computers. (SV)

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# IDRA Newsletter

IDRA FOCUS:
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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*IDRA is an independent nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving educational opportunity. Through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation, and information dissemination, we're helping to create schools that work for all children.*

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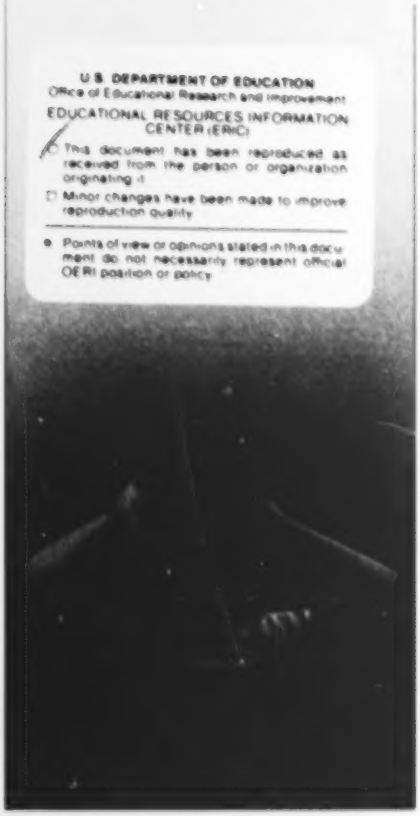

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## SCIENTIFIC LITERACY IS CHILD'S PLAY

*Hilaria Bauer, M.A.*

My students and I had been learning about polar regions for two weeks. Students in my first grade bilingual class were able to locate and describe these zones on the globe. They were also able to explain different food chains and how the climate is a consequence of the location of these regions in our planet. I was very satisfied because they were eager to learn, and their literacy skills were developing tremendously as they discovered facts about distant lands.

However, there were concepts in my lesson plans that I considered too abstract and too difficult for first graders. One of them was the concept of *adaptation*. I knew that in order to provide my students with sound scientific information, I had to introduce this concept. But, I really did not know how to do it.

Awkwardly, I started my lesson by asking questions about polar bears when one of my students interrupted me, "Ms. Bauer...yo sé porqué los osos polares son blancos [Ms. Bauer…I know why polar bears are white]." A bit annoyed, I responded, "¿Sí?...a ver David, ¿porqué son blancos? [Yes?…let's see David, why are polar bears white?]" Before I finished my question, he replied, "Por toda la nieve que está alrededor, son blancos porque la nieve es blanca [Because of all the snow around them, they are white because the snow is white]."

David was making inferences by himself. Interestingly, David did not know all the letters of the alphabet (to the dismay of his kindergarten teacher), and consequently, he had trouble decoding and spelling. However, whenever he was asked to write on his journal, he was confident that his beautifully detailed drawings would tell me how much he was learning. He was right. This gifted boy used his playful attitude to discover many details about nature. Even though he was not aware that polar bears' fur is translucid and thus reflects the whiteness of their environment; he was able to articulate a reasonable explanation for his finding. This is the foundation of scientific knowledge.

Children like David have taught me how much children do know and how little we as adults credit them for their knowledge. Usually, science is thought of as a higher-order discipline that minority students are not able to understand (Beane, 1988). Also, science is thought of as "content-oriented" rather than "process-oriented." Thus, the instructional strategies that most teachers use during math and science do not complement the learning styles of minority students (Gilligan, 1982). Consequently, this contributes to minority students' low self-concept for math and science achievement (Green, 1995).

### *Where We Are Now*

Traditionally, science has not been perceived as a basic skill in our elementary schools. Even though, in Texas, science essential elements are included as part of the core curriculum from prekindergarten to 12th grade, assessment instruments are designed to evaluate reading, writing and mathematics. Thus, districts spend most of their efforts improving students' performance in these areas. However, life in the 21st century is going to require much more than that.

***Scientific Literacy*** *- continued on page 13*



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## *In This Issue*


3 *Children of America, Take Your Mark.*

6 *A Synergistic Multi-age Model*

9 *Reflections Newsletter Editorial Page*

11 *Technology, Teachers and Early Childhood*



***The Intercultural Development Research Association*** *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity. The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, copyright © 1996) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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**Popularized in the early 1970s by author Thomas Kuhn, "paradigms" are our models or patterns of reality, shaped by our understanding and experience into a system of rules and assumptions about the world around us. The call for restructuring in education, emerging from a profound sense that education is not working for all children, requires a transformation in how we see schools, students, and their families. If we are to find a new and equitable vision of what education can and should be, new lenses are required to change the way we look at schools and the populations in them – as demonstrated by our "Now" thinkers below.**

## *That is* THEN . . . *This is NOW...*

*"[Bicultural] children grow up in intellectually and verbally barren, 'culturally deprived' homes, where they fail to receive enough stimulation from their parents to develop cognitive skills necessary to succeed in school and adulthood."*

– Richard DeLone, 1979. Quoted in *Culture and Power in the Classroom*, by Antonia Darder

*"All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity and interest in constructing their learning, in engaging in social interaction and in negotiating with everything the environment brings to them."*

– Lella Gandini, *Young Children*, November 1993

*"Teaching a young immigrant basic subjects in his native tongue retards the learning of English."*

– Charlie Gogolak, immigrant from Hungary, speaking to the Texas House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee. Quoted in *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 19, 1995

*"It is at [a] young age, before reaching 11 or 12, that children demonstrate an immense capacity to learn several languages with ease and a high degree of proficiency that will seldom be achieved later in life."*

– Arlette Torres, community relations coordinator for a utility in south Texas, September 8, 1995

*"Bilingualism fosters national disintegration."*

– Don Feder, columnist, November 3, 1995

*"Research shows that if you take a child where he is when he comes to school and you build on that, you have a much stronger student academically, intellectually, emotionally and socially."*

– Rosaura Trevino-Ligon, instructional guide at Nelson Elementary School in San Antonio. Quoted in *San Antonio Express-News*, September 1, 1995

*"Allowing bilingualism to continue to grow is very dangerous."*

– House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Quoted in *San Antonio Express-News*, November 1, 1995

# *Children of America, Take Your Mark. Ready. Set. Wait a Minute.*

*Bradley Scott, M.A.*

In this election year, I sincerely hope that parents, concerned citizens, educators and business people are seeking real answers to the questions about the status of children. In a publication entitled, *An Invitation to Your Community: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*, the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, commented:

> We do know that we must set high expectations – challenging academic standards – for all children. And we must do whatever it takes to help every child reach those expectations. That's what Goals 2000 is about and what President Clinton's whole approach to education is built around…It's not going to be easy. But, together, we can reinvent [U.S.] education – school by school and community by community. Together, we can move toward the National Education Goals and move every child toward achieving high levels of learning (1995).

We are well aware of the National Education Goals, particularly Goal 1: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn. There are three objectives for this goal:

- All children will have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school.
- Every parent in the United States will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping such parent's preschool child learn, and parents will have access to the training and support they need.
- Children will receive the nutrition, physical experiences and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies and to maintain the mental alertness necessary to be prepared to learn, and the number of low-birth weight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.

Despite such promising words, the status of children has not improved as much as we would hope. In fact, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) issued a caution last year about the new federal climate:

> Prospects for improving the lives of American children worsened dramatically…with the election of new ideological majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The newly elected House leadership proposed a radical legislative agenda that would rip away basic support for families and tear up long-standing social compacts between generations of Americans (1995).

In the *State of America's Children Yearbook 1995*, CDF reported that the status of children is questionable regarding many areas of concern that would help to make preschool children ready to meet high expectations and standards (1995). CDF provides some eye opening information on children's status:

- 15.4 million U.S. children were poor in 1993 – the highest number in 30 years.
- Poor children are three times more likely than nonpoor children to die during childhood.
- Poor children are two times more likely than other children to suffer from physical problems such as stunted growth, severe mental or physical disabilities, iron deficiency and severe asthma as a result of their poverty.

CDF also reported that more than 60 percent of married women with children younger than six are in the labor force. More than 57 percent of children younger than five whose mothers work are in either family child care homes or child care centers. While 650,000 poor children participate in Head Start, that number only represents 36 percent of those who are eligible, and Head Start still is not funded to support all of the children who are eligible for it.

Children are hungry. More than half of all food stamp recipients are children, while children make up only slightly more than one-fourth of the U.S. population. Forty-two percent of children receiving food stamps are Anglo American; 35 percent are African American; 17 percent are Latino, 3 percent are Asian, and 1 percent are Native American. The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program provided nutrition assistance to 6.5 million children in 1994, about 72 percent of those eligible. Children are hungry particularly in the summer, if they are not in school. Nearly 2.1 million children benefited from the Summer Food Service Program which is only 9 percent of the more than 18 million children who benefit from free and reduced lunch programs during the school year.

One year has passed since CDF issued that report. The thought had occurred to me that possibly the status of children could be showing signs of improvement, given the national cry for responsibility, accountability, improved fiscal management and other agreements contracted with America. But, as I sift through the just-released 1996 CDF report, I see that, while selected areas such as preschool immunizations have improved slightly and there is a modest decline in teen pregnancy, overall, people who are poor are not faring any better. It appears that, although the economy is improving, people – and particularly poor people and their children – are still in economic distress. They are even under attack.

***It appears that, although the economy is improving, people – and particularly poor people and their children – are still in economic distress.***

The CDF provides a summary of key proposed legislation that threatens to remove the floor of decency that guarantees help for poor children. A portion of that summary is provided in the box on Page 4.

Marion Wright Edelman of the CDF offers seven ways that adults must stand for

***Children of America** - continued on page 4*

| Current Law | Congressional Proposal | Child Impact |
|---|---|---|
| ***Child Care*** | | |
| Parents who are receiving welfare and participating in work-related activities and parents moving from welfare into jobs are guaranteed child care assistance.<br><br>States receive other federal funds to provide child care help for low-income working families but need not guarantee assistance for these families.<br><br>States must use a portion of their federal child care funds for activities to improve child care quality and build supply.<br><br>Child care purchased with Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds must meet basic health and safety requirements to protect children. | Increases greatly the number of families needing child care help, by requiring more parents on welfare to work.<br><br>Increases the cost of purchasing child care for each family receiving welfare, by requiring parents of preschool children to work 35 hours (rather than 20 hours) per week.<br><br>Reduces the amount of funds set aside for efforts to improve the quality and build the supply of child care.<br><br>Undermines the current health and safety standards for child care purchased with CCDBG funds. | Provides at least $6 billion less over seven years for child care than what states will need to meet new welfare work requirements.<br><br>Jeopardizes child care help for low-income working families, if states are left to make up this shortfall in funds for families receiving welfare.<br><br>Increases the risks that funding shortfalls and weakened child care standards will leave many more children in unsafe or inappropriate care. |
| ***Child Health*** | | |
| Children under six and pregnant women are guaranteed health insurance coverage under Medicaid if their family income is less than 133 percent of poverty (about 17,000 for a family of four). Children ages six through 12 are guaranteed coverage in families up to 100 percent of poverty (about $13,000 for a family of four).<br><br>Coverage for older children (ages 13 through 18) up to 100 percent of poverty will be phased in by 2001.<br><br>Eligible children are covered for virtually all the health, vision, hearing, mental health and dental services they need.<br><br>Children who are eligible for Medicaid, as well as uninsured and under-insured children, also are entitled to free vaccines under the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. | Eliminates guaranteed health coverage for low-income children and pregnant women.<br><br>Replaces the Medicaid program with fixed grants to states, at funding levels far below those needed to meet children's health care needs.<br><br>Creates the appearance of guaranteed coverage for poor children under 13 and poor pregnant women, but requires only child immunizations and family planning for adults to be included in that coverage.<br><br>Repeals the Vaccines for Children program, eliminating the guarantee of free vaccines for eligible children and denying states the opportunity to purchase vaccines at reduced, federally negotiated prices. | Leaves low-income children and pregnant women with no assurance of basic health insurance coverage.<br><br>Threatens to end health coverage for more than 5 million children. Millions of others would see their benefits reduced.<br><br>Cuts federal Medicaid funding by more than $130 billion over seven years. Combined federal and state funding could fall by more than $400 billion over seven years.<br><br>Raises the cost of full immunization against preventable diseases for millions of low-income children. |

*continued on page 5*

***Children of America*** - *continued from page 3*

children. Even though she accepts that there is certainly a need to balance the national budget, she says that it should not be done on the backs of poor, disabled, neglected and abused children and not without a debate based on the facts about the human consequences.

One of her seven proposals is a national day of commitment to be held on June 1, 1996, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The nonpartisan, nonpolitical Stand For Children Day will be a day of spiritual, family and community renewal and personal commitment to children. In standing, mothers, fathers, grandparents, nurturers, caregivers, religious people, community leaders, civil rights advocates, youth, women, men, professionals, and cultural, business and political leaders of every race, religion, income, age and faith will demonstrate their support to do the following:

- Stand together and speak truth to power for children with their presence, voices, votes and hearts.
- Stand for something more than themselves, more important than money and more lasting than things.
- Stand with those who cannot stand alone or for themselves: the young, the weak, the disabled.
- Stand strong for a few important things rather than for many desirable things. People who try to be everything to everybody end up standing for nothing or anybody.
- Stand and be counted for children in good times and bad. Children do not need fair weather advocates and God does not need fair weather soldiers.
- Stand unwaveringly for this country's values of fairness and equality; for compassion and common sense; stand

***Children of America*** - *continued on page 5*

| Current Law | Congressional Proposal | Child Impact |
|---|---|---|
| ***Basic Income Support*** | | |
| Needy children and families with incomes below state-established limits are guaranteed help under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, as long as they comply with state rules.<br><br>Federal funding to states rises and falls in response to changes in need – increasing, for example, during recessions, when jobs are scarce and AFDC case loads rise.<br><br>States are required to pay part of AFDC costs. State funds represent 45 percent of all AFDC spending.<br><br>Parents receiving AFDC (except those with young children) are required to participate in education, training or other work-related activities. | Eliminates guaranteed income assistance for even the poorest children.<br><br>Replaces the AFDC program with fixed grants to states, in amounts that would be inadequate during recessions or natural disasters.<br><br>Allows states to reduce their own funding for income assistance by as much as 25 percent and, after five years, to withdraw all state funds.<br><br>Creates a five-year lifetime limit on income assistance and allows states to set even shorter limits.<br><br>Requires parents to work 35 hours per week after two years of assistance; it also eliminates most opportunities for education and training.<br><br>Makes many children of legal immigrants ineligible for cash assistance, regardless of how poor their families are. | Removes the basic income safety net for the nation's poorest children.<br><br>Denies cash assistance to nearly 4 million needy children, when fully implemented.<br><br>Provides billions of dollars less over seven years than what states will need for creating new work programs (not including child care costs) for parents receiving welfare.<br><br>Fails to promote genuine welfare reform, leaving millions of parents without child care, education, training and other tools they need if they are to secure stable jobs and lift their families out of poverty. |
| ***Child Nutrition*** | | |
| Children in low-income families are guaranteed nutritional aid under the food stamp and child nutrition programs, which include the school lunch, school breakfast, Summer Food Service, and Child and Adult Care Food programs.<br><br>Federal funding to states for these programs rises and falls in response to changes in need. | Allows every state to end the guarantee of food stamps.<br><br>Allows as many as seven states to eliminate guarantees for school lunches and breakfasts for low-income children.<br><br>Cuts funds for nutritious meals and snacks in child care and Head Start centers and family day care homes. | Undermines the national nutritional safety net.<br><br>Reduces food stamp benefits for 14 million children. Reduces average benefits from 78 cents to 62 cents per person, per meal.<br><br>Cuts food stamps by $32 billion over seven years and cuts other child nutrition programs by $3.8 billion (80 percent of this would come from child care food programs). |

Reprinted with permission from: Children's Defense Fund. *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1996* (Washington, D.C.: CDF, 1996).

***Children of America*** - *continued from page 4*

against callous people and policies.

- Stand tall against those who seek to hurt and divide, and stand with those who seek to unite and heal our families and communities.
- Stand firmly against those who practice genderhood and racehood and classhood and culturehood, and stand with those who practice brotherhood and sisterhood and mutual respect.
- Stand up to those who mouth family values but who do not support family needs and who vote to cut Head Start and school lunches and education in the name of helping children.

Dear children of America, take caution, the road we are asking you to take may be strewn with deceptive smoking mirrors, gaping holes and obstacles that will make your achieving the goal of readiness by the year 2000 virtually impossible. Before you go, just wait a moment for the responsible, committed, politically-active adults among you to ensure that the road is properly prepared. At the very minimum, that is our moral, ethical, political and civic responsibility to you.

Okay. Moral, ethical, politically, civically responsible adults, take you mark. Ready. Set. Go.

***Resources***

Children's Defense Fund. *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1996* (National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, D.C., 1996).

Children's Defense Fund. *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1995* (National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, D.C., 1995).

U.S. Department of Education. *A Bright New Era in Education* (U.S. Department of Education: Washington, D.C., 1995).

U.S. Department of Education. *An Invitation to Your Community: Building Community Partnerships for Learning* (U.S. Department of Education: Washington, D.C., 1995).

*Bradley Scott is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development.*

# A Synergistic Multi-age Model for Minority Students

Felix Montes, Ph.D.

Multi-age grouping refers to classroom settings where students of varying ages are kept in the same class for several years, with the same teacher. Some multi-age classes have students who, if placed in a regular grade system, would correspond to the traditional pre-kindergarten to first grade classes. In a multi-age setting there is a common curriculum and, in general, the class is purposefully organized as a unit for pedagogical reasons. This is different from *multi-grade grouping*, where different grades are taught by the same teacher in the same classroom, but different curricula, activities and even physical distribution of the class are kept according to grade.

The following are seven advantages associated with multi-age education (Veenman, 1995):

- Students can form meaningful relationships that enhance their sense of belonging as they relate to students of different ages.
- Older students can tutor younger ones achieving the benefits of a tutor-tutee relationship: increased self-esteem, greater sense of purpose and faster cognitive development for both.
- Younger students have older models exhibiting a wide range of behaviors they can emulate.
- Students relate to each other and to their teacher for longer periods of time, promoting a more stable development and a sense of family and community.
- Since the emphasis is not in passing from one grade to the next, there is less anxiety about achieving at a specified pace, and, conversely, there are more opportunities for the development of cognitive and social skills.
- Older students can revisit past topics as they are introduced to younger students, providing another opportunity for learning them. Older students can also help younger students by providing insights into these topics that might make them more understandable.
- Individualized instruction is not only appropriate but inherent to a multi-age setting, where it is obvious that different students have different needs.

In sum, multi-age promotes the development of the whole person. Students are not cast into a system for the purpose of filling in their brains as soon as possible. The purpose is to provide students with a rich environment where they can develop their social, behavioral, cognitive and emotional persona. It provides an opportunity for creating a truly student-centric curriculum.

### *Multi-age and Minority Students*

It has been widely documented that most early childhood education practices are at odds with best practices for minority students. Limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, for example, are generally viewed as needing intensive doses of drill, repetition and structured English instruction, along with a sustained injection of the prevalent culture dogmas. But, such approaches stem from a deficit model about language learning that is highly inadequate to prepare language-minority students to acquire English and to study academic content (Cárdenas and Cárdenas, 1995). English-only preschool programs force students to quickly shift to English and lose their native language.

*Multi-age Model - continued on page 7*

## Developmentally Appropriate Practices

"A developmentally appropriate program is both age appropriate and individually appropriate; that is, the program is designed for the age group served and implemented with attention to the needs and differences of the individual children enrolled."

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

**Age Appropriateness**

There are predictable sequences of growth.

The learning environment reflects developmental sequences.

**Cultural and Linguistic Appropriateness**

It is important to use the child's primary language in the classroom.

Home language or dialect is important to the integrity of the family and the identity of the child.

Language is intimately related to cognitive development and should not be interrupted in its development.

**Individual Appropriateness**

Each child is unique.

The curriculum is responsive to individual differences.

Learning experiences are experiential, interactive and challenging.

*Multi-age Model - continued from page 6*

Research has shown that this method does not work, and, for many students, this early language shift negatively affects communication within their families, which in turn has adverse affects on their family structures, eventually disintegrating these families. Parents who have not learned English are unable to pass along their cultural heritage and values to their children, and many young minority adolescents become involved in gangs and disengaged from their families as a result of the inferiority implied by the forced early shift of language and culture (IDRA, 1995).

Can multi-age education provide an alternative? This clearly depends on the underlying philosophy of the instructional approach. Multi-age is only a grouping strategy. Assuming that the teachers' and the school's educational philosophy is based on doing what it takes to make the school compatible with the needs of the minority students, the multi-age environment is promising.

Because of the seven advantages listed above, a multi-age environment provides ample opportunities for the students to grow into the new language while at the same time preserve their native language and culture. Multi-age grouping can fertilize the grounds where developmentally appropriate practices can flourish. Native cultural activities can easily be incorporated into a multi-age environment to make learning more meaningful to the students. When the appropriate pedagogical model is at the base of its application, multi-age grouping can liberate schools from the rigid mold that inhibits creativity, exploration and experimentation.

### *Multi-age Grouping: Theoretical Background*

The literature in the area of multi-age grouping is abundant. Multi-age grouping was adopted in England in the 1960s and in many other countries to ameliorate limited educational resources, such as teachers and classrooms (see for example, Veenman, 1995). Much of the current theoretical work in this area is based on the pedagogy of Lev S. Vygotsky (1896-1934), who underscored the role of social interaction in the development of the higher psychological functions.

Vygotsky proposed that all learning is mediated by the child's social interaction (1978). Learning first happens in the interaction at the social level, then it is internalized at the psychological, personal level. One consequence that Vygotsky derived from this hypothesis is that not only is the content learned but so also is the context, the way in which the learning happens. Thus, the child eagerly internalizes the subtle clues we emit about values, power and social organization along with the math, science and history we might be teaching. Multi-age grouping can potentially provide an environment where these contextual, social interactions can be arranged in a beneficial manner for all the students.

Another Vygotskian construct that supports the multi-age grouping model is the *zone of proximal development* concept (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky proposed that a child can more easily learn from an older one because the two share a developmental zone. The older child operates at the younger child's zone of proximal development to make the material accessible yet challenging enough to stimulate growth. Multi-age then seems to be the ideal grouping model for this natural development to occur.

For most teachers accustomed to a grade grouping model, multi-age grouping represents a unique challenge. As with any liberating experience, this presents so many possibilities that teachers might be bewildered. Teachers are asked to be creative and to experiment with new things, but how can they actually know that what they are doing is having the appropriate impact on the students? Here is where action research skills are invaluable for the effective multi-age grouping implementation.

Action research offers the means for teachers to improve their classroom practices through cycles of observation, reflection, planning and execution (Johnson, 1995). Action research is also a means to enhance teachers' collaboration among themselves and with administrators and practitioners (Montes, 1995). It empowers teachers with the tools that let them know what works and what does not. It also suggests a mechanism for feedback and adjustment.

*Multi-age Model - continued on page 8*

## Characteristics of Young Learners

Young children are innately curious and will strive to learn.

Playful activity is a natural way of learning.

Young children learn by imitating, talking and interacting with each other as well as with adults.

Concrete and multisensory materials are children's tools for learning.

Young children can simultaneously acquire knowledge and skills in many areas.

Learning occurs at different rates.

Learning impacts the "whole" child and vice versa.

Real-life experiences related to the interests of children promote learning.

Experiencing successes builds a sense of security and self-confidence.

Source: Kentucky Department of Education. *Kentucky's Primary School: The Wonder Years (Program Description 1)*. (Frankfort, Ken.: Kentucky Department of Education, 1991).

***When the appropriate pedagogical model is at the base of its application, multi-age grouping can liberate schools from the rigid mold that inhibits creativity, exploration and experimentation.***

*Multi-age Model - continued from page 7*

***The IDRA Multi-age Model***

The IDRA model of multi-age grouping synergistically combines the rich tradition of educational research with action research and the necessary alignment of the schools with the minority students they serve. The first two components are discussed above.

The classic theoretical work that speaks to the third component is known as the *theory of incompatibilities* (Cárdenas and Cárdenas, 1995). José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas found that many problems associated with minority students in the school system (dropping out, low performance, high retention) originate in incompatibilities between the characteristics of the students and those of the instructional programs that are supposed to serve them. "An instructional program developed for a White, Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking middle-class school population cannot be, and is not, adequate for a non-White, non-Anglo-Saxon, non-English-speaking or non-middle-class population" (1995). Based on this theory, which has been proven again and again since its inception in 1975, the following philosophical axioms are included as an intrinsic component of the IDRA multi-age model:

- Minority children can learn. Past failures are the result of inadequate programs. Teachers can use action research techniques to systematically attune the program to the student's real life conditions.
- Cultural pluralism is a necessary condition in our schools and our society. The student's culture ought to be celebrated by its incorporation into the learning process in meaningful ways. The native language is to be cherished. The student's heritage is to be valued.

In summary, the IDRA multi-age grouping model does the following:

- Incorporates current theoretical understanding on how students learn as a student-centric curriculum is dynamically created.
- Promotes the integration of minority students into the educational system, into their families and into society.
- Empowers teachers to dynamically change classroom conditions through action research to make education work for all the students.
- Celebrates cultural diversity by its meaningful incorporation into the daily school planning and activities.

IDRA was recently awarded a grant to implement a multi-age research project titled, *Multi-age Early Childhood for Limited-English-Proficient Students: A Research Study*. This is a three-year research study funded by the Office of Bilingual Education of Minority Languages and Affairs (OBEMLA) in the U.S. Department of Education. The goals of the study are the following:

- To conduct teacher initiated research on the effects of multi-age grouping on limited-English-proficient students' learning and development;
- To test the theoretical underpinnings of early childhood multi-age programs and their applicability for limited-English-proficient students (e.g., ungraded environment, developmentally appropriate learning, emergent literacy and language acquisition);
- To determine the feasibility of expanding the approach to the second grade at the research site; and
- To develop and refine a model for early childhood multi-age programs for limited-English-proficient students.

The project is being implemented in collaboration with a school in San Antonio, Texas. IDRA provides all training and technical assistance. The teachers do the actual action research as they implement their multi-age classes. The expected results of the project are twofold. On one hand, the project will increase capacity among teachers to conduct and use research on multi-age programs for limited-English-proficient early childhood students. On the other hand, a more rigorous, fact-grounded model for multi-age grouping on limited-English-proficient students' learning and development will emerge as the results of the study are analyzed.


***Resources***

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*Dr. Felix Montes is a research associate in the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation.*

## COMING UP!

In May, the *IDRA Newsletter* focuses on immigrant education.

## *UPCOMING EVENTS*

***"Latinos as a Critical Voice: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders"***

A national conference on education and leadership development for Latino youth.

Sponsored by ASPIRA

May 16-18, 1996
Washington, D.C.

*For more information, call 202/835-3600 or E-mail to: aspiral@aol.com*

***"Achieving Academic Excellence in Our Multicultural Schools"***

Presented by the Common Destiny Alliance and the Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington

June 27-29, 1996
Washington, D.C.

*For more information, call 301/405-2341 (see also Page 15)*

# REFLECTIONS

*Marian Wright Edelman*

## NEEDED: A MASSIVE MORAL MOVEMENT TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

When Jesus Christ invited little children to come unto him, he did not invite only rich, middle-class, White, male children without disabilities, from two-parent families, or our own children to come. He welcomed all children. There are no illegitimate children in God's sight. James Agee eloquently reminded: "In every child who is born under no matter what circumstances and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again, and in him, too, one more, and each of us, our terrific responsibility toward human life: toward the utmost idea of goodness, of the horror of terrorism, and of God."

Yet every day too many of us fail our terrific responsibility toward our own children and millions of other people's children who are America's and God's potentiality.

It is not just poor or minority children who are afflicted by the breakdown of moral, family and community values today. The pollution of our airwaves, air, food and water; growing economic insecurity among middle-class children and young families; rampant drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy and domestic violence among rich, middle-class and poor people alike; AIDS; random gun and terrorist violence; resurging racial intolerance in our places of learning, work and worship; and the crass, empty materialism of too much of our culture threaten every American child. Affluenza is a more dangerous virus than influenza for millions of American children.

Every day in America, 2,660 children are born into poverty and 27 die from poverty. And every day 7,962 children of all races and classes are reported abused or neglected, and three die from abuse; 15 die from firearms and 2,833 drop out of school; 2,700 get pregnant; and 790 are born at low birthweight. We are first in the world in military and health technology but 18th in the industrialized world in infant mortality.

But it is poor children who suffer most. What kind of country permits this? A poor one? An undemocratic one? An uncaring one? A foolish one? One that ignores the biblical injunction to "defend the poor and fatherless and do justice to the afflicted and needy?"

Our failure to place children first as parents, communities, corporate, civic, cultural and political leaders is our Achilles' heel and will be our future undoing. Indeed the present unraveling of our family fabric is a portent of what is to come if we do not correct course and regain our moral moorings. The stresses and strains of making a living leave too many parents too little time with their children. Too many affluent parents are more preoccupied with material than with eternal things – with fun rather than faithfulness in providing the family rituals, continuity and consistent companionship children need to grow up healthy, caring, loving and productive. Parenting itself is not a valued calling, and people who care for children get the least support in America. Too many neighbors look out just for themselves and take little or no interest in each other's children. Too many business people seem to forget they are parents and family members and treat children as consumers to whom they can market excessively violent, sexually charged messages and products they would not want their own children to see or use. And too many faith communities fail to provide the strong moral leadership parents and communities need to meet their shared responsibilities to children.

What you and I stand for and do now as parents – and encourage our political leaders to stand for and do in this last national election year of the century – will shape our nation's fate and our children's futures in the next century and millennium. It is time to call the moral question about whether America truly values and will stand up for children not just with words but with work; not just with promises but with leadership and investment in child health, early childhood education, after-school programs and family economic security; not just with a speech or photo opportunity, but with sustained positive commitment to meet child needs.

What does it mean to be *for* children? A young mother walked into a WIC (Women, Infants and Children's nutritional program) office seeking help to feed her hungry baby. When an overworked and tired WIC worker saw the baby drinking from a red liquid, she was ready to reprimand the mother. Didn't she know that babies needed milk, not Kool-Aid? As she was about to scold, the young mother broke into tears. She had run out of money a week ago, hadn't eaten in three days, and had used her last money to buy baby formula which had run out the day before. She knew her baby needed to eat so she had gone to McDonald's and filled the baby's bottle with two free things: ketchup and water.

Do you think this hungry baby is responsible for America's ills – for our budget deficit, crime problem and poor education system? For the structural changes, wage stagnation in our labor market, de-industrialization of our cities and economic blight in many rural areas? Do this baby and desperate mother have any control over the downsizing of giant corporations, the replacement of human workers by technology or the exportation of jobs abroad in our global economy? Is this baby, who had a one in three chance of being born without timely prenatal care and a one in four chance of being born poor, the cause or the victim of the widening income gap between rich and poor that allowed 23,000 poor families with children to live on less income in 1993 than one entertainment industry executive and let the average CEO at 10 major companies earn 225 times the salary of the companies' average worker in 1994, up from 41 times in 1975?

This baby did not manufacture or sell the 211 million guns circulating in our nation that kill an American child like her every hour

*Needed: A Massive – continued on page 10*

***Needed: A Massive*** *- continued from page 9*

and a half. She did not contribute to the pervasive breakdown of moral, family and community values in our too selfish and too secular culture. And this baby is not responsible for her mothers's or father's poverty or behavior. Or ours.

This baby did not vote for Democrats, Republicans, independents, liberals or conservatives, cannot make campaign contributions, lobby or hold press conferences to make her needs known.

This baby – like my child and yours – is a sacred gift of a loving God and a citizen of the wealthiest nation in the history of the planet. Denying her food, preventive health care, the chance to get ready for and learn in school, and access to safe child care if her parents work outside the home is immoral and lacks common sense and budget sense.

Blaming and punishing this baby for our personal or collective discontents, for the shortcomings and unfairness of our economy, or for short-term political or economic gain contravenes the Old and New Testament and American covenants we honor so well in words but so poorly in deeds.

The current budget balancing debate is not about money. It is about values and ideology and national direction and the ideals of fairness and morality we seek to reflect and pass on to our children.

Have we Americans become so allergic to sharing, caring and sacrifice that we will continue to sit back mute and stand by apathetically when our leaders make decisions that mock the prophets, the gospel and basic fair play? Have we become so spiritually dead that the morally unthinkable killing and maiming of children is acceptable? Will we let powerful lobbyists trample powerless children and corporate welfare grow at the expense of child welfare? Do we believe massive back-end investment is preferable to front-end investment in prevention and early intervention? Does it make sense for the Pentagon to spend $20 million an hour when the internal enemies of poverty, violence, neglect and abuse are killing our children every day? Is America more about providing hope and opportunity or about providing Mortal Kombat and the Power Rangers for our young? Is the American dream only for some of us or is it for all of us?

The prodigal son returned home before it was too late. The rich man did not. Can America come home before it's too late to its founding creed of God-given human equality and act to leave no child behind?

*Marian Wright Edelman is the executive director of the Children's Defense Fund. Reprinted from the* State of America's Children Yearbook 1996 *with permission.*

## *Event for Parents by Parents in May*

***Families United for Education: A Voice for Our Future*** **will be held in San Antonio on May 11,1996. This conference is being organized by parents city wide and is co-sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), and AVANCE of San Antonio to serve as a starting point for an ongoing parental involvement effort. This exciting and informative conference is being planned by parents for parents to address the issues that affect our lives and our children's education.**

**The conference will include many relevant topics, fun entertainment and interesting speakers. The keynote speaker will be Judge Juan Chavira. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. For more information, call Grace Garza at 210/432-1605 or Holly Custard or Anna Alicia Romero at 210/684-8180.**

## *IDRA Workshop On Workshops (WOW)*

***May 3-4, 1996***
***The Center at IDRA***
***San Antonio, Texas***

***June 10-11, 1996***
***preceding the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) Summer Work Conference***
***Austin, Texas***

This two-day experience spurs participants to become **more effective presenters**. The workshop uses an experience-based model that has practical application for you in your job. Current, research-based principles provide a context for participants to collaborate in creating informative, practical and engaging presentations. The *WOW* is **highly participatory** and directly addresses participants' needs and challenges. During the *WOW*, participants will:

- Experience a **complete process** for planning and conducting workshops.
- Review **principles of adult learning**.
- Contrast **needs assessment** approaches.
- Write and refine workshop **objectives**.
- Design innovative **activities**.
- Practice and **expand facilitation skills**.
- **Network** with other professionals.

The *WOW* is facilitated by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed. lead trainer in IDRA's Division of Professional Development and creator of the highly popular *WOW*. With more than 25 years of professional training experience, he can teach your staff or group the techniques every trainer needs to conduct meaningful workshops!

The cost is $150 per participant. This includes all training materials and personalized instruction, plus a copy of the *WOW Workbook* (a $25 value). Designed for people who are responsible for conducting training and workshops, the *WOW* is particularly useful for participants who bring workshop titles and materials that they want to work on.

*To register for this event or to schedule a* WOW *for your group, call Rogelio Lopez del Bosque or Aurelio Montemayor, 210/684-8180.*

# TECHNOLOGY, TEACHERS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

Aurora Yáñez-Pérez, M.A.

As the 21st century fast approaches, technology will have become ingrained in the social fabric of our society. Computers will, in all likelihood, have become more powerful tools and will be used by greater numbers of people. In order for the people of tomorrow to be able to use this technology they must be introduced to the technology today. Many agree that this introduction to technology, and particularly to computers, should take place in the school and at an early age.

In their book, *The Computer as a Paintbrush*, Janice Beaty and Hugh Tucker explain that teachers who are using computers in the preschool classroom give an "enthusiastic description of the learning and developmental benefits their children are deriving from their interaction with this unique learning tool" (1987). Certain terms crop up in teachers' conversations like: social skills, problem-solving skills, new vocabulary, creativity and equal opportunity for disadvantaged students. Beaty and Tucker state, "Young children's brains were naturally designed to absorb new ideas and relationships in the way that computer programs present them" (1987).

Some of the benefits of computer use by students include the following:

- Computer use stimulates cooperative behavior and promotes self-esteem. It provides opportunities for success when children can go through all the exercises and when they can teach other students.
- Computer use provides an early understanding of technology. Because the computer is a patient instructor, students can work on programs for as long as they want.
- Computer use promotes self-control. For example, children learn that the computer keys need to be pressed one at a time to be able to get results.
- Computer use serves as an equalizer: The earlier girls have positive experiences with this medium the better because girls are not threatened by the use of technology when they are this young.

A barrier appears when teachers are uncomfortable with the technology. Teachers can consequently project their discomfort to the students. In their article, "The Computer as a Doorstop: Technology as a Disempowerment," Thomas Callaster Jr. and Faith Dunne state:

> Machines are tools, valuable only when a human intelligence organizes their use in a productive way. In the classroom, that human is the teacher who controls the nature of the environment and what happens there. Good classroom tools extend the teacher's power to create a rich learning environment. If the teacher does not know what to make of the tool or fears it or misconstrues its uses, it will be used badly or not at all. If the teacher perceives the machine as a master, not a servant, its potential will never be realized (1993).

Once teachers feel comfortable with the computer, it is important to establish an environment that is conducive to children's learning. Before this can be accomplished, certain notions have to be dispelled.

For instance, **don't be afraid to let children touch the computer** for fear of them breaking it. Computers are sturdy instruments. Once ground rules are established, children tend to monitor themselves.

**Don't worry that the computer software might be too difficult for the children.** Research has found that children know much more than they are given credit for, and they tend to adapt quickly to stimulating exercises.

**Don't be tempted to require students to work alone on the computer.** Because of the characteristic of the computer screen, it can be easily seen by a number of

*Technology, Teachers - continued on page 12*

> ***"YOUNG CHILDREN'S BRAINS WERE NATURALLY DESIGNED TO ABSORB NEW IDEAS AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WAY THAT COMPUTER PROGRAMS PRESENT THEM"***
>
> - Janice Beaty and Hugh Tucker, 1987

## DID YOU KNOW?

ONLY ONE IN SEVEN CHILD CARE CENTERS AND ONE IN 10 FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES ARE OF GOOD ENOUGH QUALITY TO ENHANCE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT.

— *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1996*, Children's Defense Fund

IN 1995, HEAD START SERVED 752,000 CHILDREN – ABOUT 36 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE.

— *The State of America's Children Yearbook 1996*, Children's Defense Fund

DIFFERENCES IN ENROLLMENT RATES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ACROSS FAMILY INCOME AND RACE MAY INDICATE DIFFERENTIAL ACCESS TO THIS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE. CHILDREN FROM LOWER INCOME FAMILIES HAVE LOWER PARTICIPATION RATES IN PRESCHOOL. IN 1993, 24 PERCENT OF THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WERE ENROLLED COMPARED TO 52 PERCENT OF THOSE FROM HIGH-INCOME FAMILIES.

— *The Condition of Education*, Internet posting. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

## Model of Learning and Teaching

| What Children Do | What Teachers Do |
|---|---|
| ***Awareness*** | |
| Experience | Create the environment |
| Acquire an interest | Provide the opportunities by introducing new objects, events, people |
| Recognize broad parameters | Invite interest by posing problem or question |
| Attend | Respond to child's interest or shared experience |
| Perceive | Show interest, enthusiasm |
| ***Exploration*** | |
| Observe | Facilitate |
| Explore materials | Support and enhance exploration |
| Collect information | Extend play |
| Discover | Describe child's activity |
| Represent | Ask open-ended questions, such as "What else could you do?" |
| Figure out components | Respect child's thinking and rule systems |
| Construct own understanding | Allow for constructive error |
| Apply own rules | |
| Create personal meaning | |
| ***Inquiry*** | |
| Examine | Help children refine understanding |
| Investigate | Guide children, focus attention |
| Propose explanations | Ask more focused questions, such as "What else works like this? What happens if?" |
| Focus | Provide information when requested |
| Compare own thinking with that of others | Help children make connections |
| Generalize | Allow time for sustained inquiry |
| Relate to prior learning | |
| Adjust to conventional rule systems | |
| ***Utilization*** | |
| Use the learning in many ways; learning becomes functional | Create vehicles for application in real world |
| Represent learning in various ways | Help children apply to new situations |
| Apply to new situations | Provide meaningful situations to use learning |
| Formulate new hypotheses and repeat cycle | |

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Internet posting*

***Technology, Teachers*** *- continued from page 11*

children at once who can then provide feedback to each other. It is important for children to work at least in pairs so that they can give each other valuable feedback and instruction.

**Don't believe another common misconception that students should work in silence in the computer.** Dr. Chris Green of IDRA comments:

> Students, especially young children and others still acquiring language, need extensive listening and speaking practice in order to acquire a strong oral language foundation. Just as you will see young children talking to themselves as they play, if they are truly engaged with a book or computer program you should see them "talking to" the book or computer. Including others in the conversation – teachers, other adults, peers – can enhance this natural language development process (1996).

Dr. Green recommends that teachers look for software programs that provide listening practice.

**Don't believe that once students have a good software program in front of them and are interacting, the students no longer need the assistance of the teacher.** This is incorrect. Although there are certain occasions when it is beneficial for students to work without supervision, Dr. Green states:

> All educational materials benefit from the interventions of a good teacher. You wouldn't just hand students a book and expect them to learn all they need from it by themselves. The graphics, stories and activities students encounter via software can be the vehicle for rich discussions just as a book, movie or object can. They can describe what they see, predict what will come next, make suggestions for answers and other responses, explain why the group should follow their suggestions (1996).

**Don't be concerned that students do not know how to spell or type.** Children tend to "hunt and peck and use invented spelling at the early stages of learning to write via computers" (Green, 1996).

There is some literature available that addresses how to choose software programs that are developmentally appropriate for early childhood. However, there is less literature on linguistically appropriate software. This is an important issue because, while the value of using technology in early childhood is being hailed, there is a population of students whose needs are not being met. Language-minority children may miss out on the opportunity to develop their computer skills and reap the benefits that other children will enjoy, because – as often happens – their differences are either forgotten or ignored. While the computer is a universal tool, it is necessary for people to ensure that it is multilingual – capable of communicating with the user in a language that he or she understands and is comfortable using. In the school setting, providing linguistically diverse software will help meet the needs of language-minority students, and it can also provide challenging opportunities for other students to expand upon or acquire new language skills.

***Resources***

Beaty, Janice C. and W. Hugh Tucker. *The Computer as a Paintbrush* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company, 1987).

Callaster Jr., Thomas and Faith Dunne. "The Computer

***Technology, Teachers*** *- continued on page 15*

*Scientific Literacy - continued from page 1*

Most facts regarding the scientific literacy of U.S. students are dismal. In their book, *Science Matters: Achieving Scientific Literacy*, Robert Hazen and James Trefil state that people in this country as a whole do not have the knowledge they need to cope with the life they will have to lead in the next century (1991). The authors claim that scientists and educators have not provided the necessary background knowledge students need to cope with the world of the future.

When we examine the status of minorities in science, the picture looks even worse. African Americans and Hispanics constitute 10 percent and 7 percent of the professional workforce, respectively. The representation of each group in the scientific workforce is only 2 percent (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, 1993).

As educators, we have allowed ourselves to believe the following:

- Science is hard.
- Science processes and content are not appropriate for everybody.
- In a saturated curriculum, we need to concentrate on the basics: reading, writing and mathematics.

Unfortunately, these attitudes have prevented us from developing scientifically-literate citizens. In addition, they have obliterated a knowledge that comes very naturally, just by virtue of being human.

Consider two basic principles in child development and learning that enhance scientific literacy: (1) Children construct knowledge, and (2) Children learn through play.

### *Children Construct Knowledge*

In practice this means that children create knowledge as a result of dynamic interactions between children and their physical and social environments. Children discover knowledge through experimentation. This principle states that children formulate their own hypotheses and test them through mental actions and physical manipulations. The newly acquired information becomes part of their schema. These same steps are followed by scientists throughout the world as they search for answers to their questions. By nature, children use the scientific method in order to make sense of their surroundings.

Early childhood environments that provide developmentally appropriate activities are helping children to become scientifically literate. Children who are allowed to explore their own interests are going to be able to formulate more new and exciting questions. As educators, we need to nurture children's curiosity into scientific inquiry by allowing them to explore, test and solve problems.

***BY NATURE, CHILDREN USE THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN ORDER TO MAKE SENSE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS. EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS THAT PROVIDE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES ARE HELPING CHILDREN TO BECOME SCIENTIFICALLY LITERATE.***

### *Children Learn through Play*

In practice, this principle translates into providing opportunities for exploration, experimentation and manipulation through play. During play, children examine and define what they have learned from other sources. Just think about a group of five-year-olds in the playground saying: "I'll be the ranger and you'll be the monster. You can attack me with your solar-powered, electron annihilator shot-gun." It is through play that children develop their imagination, creativity and language.

In the effective early childhood classroom, play is the vehicle for learning. Thus, acquiring scientific literacy becomes child's play. Children answer a myriad of questions through play. Consider the girl who just ventured to the top of the monkey-bars. She calls you: "¡Mira qué alto llegué! [Look, how high I got!]" She questions herself on whether or not she can do it, she starts climbing to test this, and finally she finds her answer: She does it! Play provides the setting for experimentation. As we can see, developmentally appropriate activities are essential for scientific literacy.

### *Scientific Literacy is Possible*

How we communicate scientific literacy is just as important as providing developmentally appropriate activities. We need to recognize that all children are cognitively, linguistically and emotionally connected to the language and culture of their home (NAEYC, 1996). An early childhood classroom that is conducive to scientific literacy provides opportunities for children to express their discoveries in many ways. Children must feel that their findings are valued regardless of the language they use to articulate them. A standard form of language is not important at this stage. What is important is for children to realize that their learning is important and that their communication is appreciated.

Young children acquire scientific backgrounds more easily if quality instruction is provided through their first language (Cummins, 1989; Krashen, 1992). Preservice and inservice training is needed for bilingual educators in the area of science so that they feel comfortable guiding bilingual students to achieve scientific literacy.

Scientific literacy can be achieved because children can learn. It is up to us as adults to provide the nurturing environments children need to develop their creativity, their imagination and their knowledge. Who knows, perhaps the answer to incurable diseases or the ability to predict earthquakes accurately resides within that girl who just spilled the red paint all over your carpet. By the way, be creative and merciful, the incident may lead you to a meaningful scientific lesson.

#### *Resources*


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Sprung, B., Froschl, M. and Campbell, P. B. *What Will Happen If... Young Children and the Scientific Method* (New York, N.Y.: Educational Equity Concepts, Inc., 1985).


*Hilaria Bauer is an education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development.*

## IDRA Early Childhood Training

IDRA is committed to helping early childhood educators create programs that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant, and sensitive to empower young children, their families and their schools. In this effort, IDRA offers assistance through a variety of initiatives, such as the following:

***Administrators' Training for Early Childhood Settings***

This training provides administrators with practical knowledge about managing early childhood settings.

***Dual Language***

This initiative helps schools structure their bilingual programs in order to provide a cohesive curriculum for linguistically diverse students.

***Emergent Literacy***

IDRA implements projects that enhance literacy development for all children. These projects emphasize written language development through culturally and linguistically appropriate practices.

***Multicultural Education***

This training provides professionals with an in-depth view to the variety of cultural issues that play a part of the school setting.

***Parental Involvement***

Through this effort IDRA provides parents with practical ideas about school policy, how to help their children with academic content (TAAS tips for parents) and conflict resolution (discipline management).

***Parenting for Teenage Parents***

This project offers educational agencies with support for teenage parents of very young children. This project offers teenagers practical strategies to help their youngsters become effective learners.

***Playtime and Playgrounds***

This initiative helps caregivers planning for "play" as integral component of child development.

***Playtime Is Science***

The *Playtime Is Science* project empowers parents and students for academic development through experimentation and fun.

*For information on IDRA training and technical assistance, contact Rogelio López del Bosque, Hilaria Bauer or Bradley Scott at 210/684-8180.*

## *Coming in May!*

## *The Sixth Annual Coca-Cola Valued Youth National Training Seminar and Valued Youth Conference*

Whether you are already involved in this successful cross-age tutoring program or are simply interested in how it might be implemented in your school, here's your chance to get involved. Make plans ***now*** to attend the Sixth Annual Coca-Cola Valued Youth National Training Seminar!

**May 16-17, 1996**
Our Lady of the Lake University
San Antonio, Texas

Special events and presentations include:

- **Panels and individual speakers** will detail the program components and explain how tutoring can help students in at-risk situations stay in school. Valued Youth tutors from a number of campuses will display their work and be available to answer questions.
- **A student panel** will give every participant a chance to hear from the students about what makes the program work for them. Valued Youth **parents** will also be on hand to share their experiences with the program.
- **School site visits** are planned to provide participants the unique opportunity of seeing some of San Antonio's Valued Youth tutors in action.
- **Concurrent sessions** with the IDRA site coordinators will provide additional program review and planning time for current program participants.
- **A gala luncheon** in honor of our participating Valued Youth tutors and parents will cap off the seminar with a very special guest speaker.

*For more information contact Linda Cantu or Lena Guerra at: 210/684-8180, fax 210/684-5389.*

## Conference to be Held on Multicultural Education

A national conference on "Achieving Academic Excellence in Our Multicultural Schools" will he held June 27-29, 1996, in Washington, D.C. The conference will draw on the findings of leading researchers and the experiences of effective educators to provide participants with successful strategies for improving the academic achievement of all students.

The event is being presented by the Common Destiny Alliance (CODA) and the Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington.

Prominent scholars will summarize research on:

- a multicultural theory of learning,
- responsive instructional strategies,
- organizations that promote effectiveness and equity,
- improving race and ethnic relations to enhance achievement, and
- parent and community involvement that supports student performance.

Demonstrations of effective programs from throughout the nation will be featured. Educators will share their experiences of having effectively implemented programs that improve the academic performance of all children. Small group discussions will provide opportunities to explore specific issues related to policy and practice.

"Achieving Academic Excellence in Our Multicultural Schools" will identify research and effective practices that contribute to the academic success of all students in multicultural schools. Participants will come away with practical strategies for the design and implementation of effective programs in their schools and communities. The conference will be of interest to teachers, teacher educators, school district and state agency personnel, staff of education and advocacy organizations, and policy makers.

CODA is a national consortium of scholars and organizations – including IDRA – working to improve race and ethnic relations and committed to educational equity.

The Center for Multicultural Education focuses on research and activities related to equity, intergroup relations and the achievement of students of color.

*For more information or a registration form contact CODA at 301/405-2341.*

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***Technology, Teachers*** *- continued from page 12*

as a Doorstep: Technology as Disempowerment," *Educational Digest*, 1993, Volume 58, Number 9, page 4.

Green, Chris. Interview with the author, 1996.

*Aurora Yáñez-Pérez is a research assistant in the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation.*

## *Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities*

In February, IDRA worked with **5,860** teachers, administrators and parents through **50** training and technical assistance activities and **73** program sites in **eight** states. Topics included:

- Multicultural Education
- Integrating Technology in the Classroom
- Literature-based Instruction
- Teacher as Researcher
- Cooperative Learning
- Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – Implementation Meetings
- ESL Strategies

Participating agencies and school districts include:

- Univ. of Houston – Downtown
- Southwest Arkansas Migrant Co-op
- San Antonio ISD
- Eagle Pass ISD
- Orleans Parish, Louisiana
- Corpus Christi ISD
- Laredo ISD
- Judson ISD

IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision-makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula.

*For information on IDRA services for your school district or group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.*

## *Third Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Institute Held*

This month, preschool and daycare teachers are gathering for two days to celebrate the International Week of the Young Child through special sessions on bilingual early childhood education methods. The Third Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Educators' Institute is being held April 22-23, 1996 in San Antonio. The theme is *Nurturing Leaders for the 21st Century* because preparing for the 21st century means restructuring schools to help *all* children to be ready to succeed, excel and face the challenges of the next century.

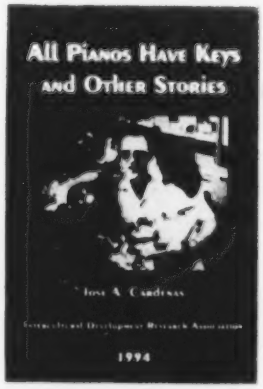
During the event, teachers and parents from around the state have an opportunity to visit two of San Antonio's most successful early childhood programs. Also, a video conference is connecting participants in five cities around the state for a panel discussion about early childhood education and day care funding strategies. Participants include administrators and parent leaders from the Rio Grande Valley area, El Paso, Midland, Austin and Kilgore.

Other sessions include ways to use technology in early childhood and hands-on science instruction that nurtures children's natural curiosity into scientific inquiry by allowing them to explore, test and solve problems. A group of parents from San Antonio are leading a session on ways schools can foster parental involvement, particularly in school decision-making.

This event focuses on nurturing the development of strong early childhood programs and experiences to prepare young children for the challenges of the 21st century. It focuses on creating and building strong foundations in early childhood programs that can also serve as a powerful springboard into their upper-level school experiences.

## *All Pianos Have Keys and Other Stories*

**by Dr. José A. Cárdenas**




In a way, this small, 134-page book complements Dr. José Cárdenas' larger *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy* just published by Simon and Schuster. The multicultural education book is an anthology of 92 professional articles resulting from his 45 years as a professional educator. *All Pianos Have Keys* represents the lighter side of these 45 years.

"The seriousness of my professional life has been paralleled by extensive humor in my personal life. I enjoy a funny story and a good joke," writes Cárdenas in the Preface.

The first eight articles deal with the lighter side of his life. They include personal anecdotes from childhood to adulthood. The second section consists of 12 anecdotes where humor and professional seriousness have intersected. The last section consists of nine articles on a variety of professional topics addressed in a lighter context than is possible in professional publications.

*All Pianos Have Keys* is distributed exclusively by the Intercultural Development Research Association ($12.70). Royalties from the sale of this book have been assigned by the author to the José A. Cárdenas Student Stipend Fund for dropout prevention. Contact IDRA at 210/684-8180 or 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228; Fax 210/684-5389. It is IDRA policy that all orders totalling less than $30 be pre-paid.

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17